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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of teacher inservice education programs is discussed. Evaluation of an inservice program is aimed at answering questions about the program's effectiveness and providing a description of the impact the experience has on the participants. Curriculum evaluation should be concerned with four kinds of decisions: (1) planning; (2) programming (specification of the procedures, personnel, facilities, budget, and other resource requirements); (3) implementing; and (4) recycling. Overall, program evaluation is approached through formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is the modification and improvement of a program through its development and implementation. Summative evaluation is an end-of-experience assessment of the relevant dimensions of the evaluation design. A follow-up evaluation can take different forms to give additional important information about a program. The key to a successful evaluation of inservice teacher education is having adequate resources and development of a system during initial planning for a workshop. A reference section lists several manuals and articles on workshop and institute evaluation. (SLD)

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ASSESSING PROFESSIONAL OUTCOMES IN PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS:

THE CASE OF TEACHER IN-SERVICE[1]

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Workshops, institutes and other types of inservice education programs are widely used to upgrade and renew the skills of teachers and other professionals. It is estimated that inservice teacher education is a two billion dollar a year investment (Orlich, 1984). In order to be accountable and show the true worth of a program the evaluation component must be given due emphasis. However, this element is frequently overlooked. The question must be asked, "did the program make an impact on the participants and how?" Through the use of systematic evaluation an institution can be accountable to funding agencies, show the real worth of an inservice program, and be able to improve future workshops and institutes.

Background to Program Evaluation

Evaluation of teaching and educational programs can be traced back to 2000 B.C. when "civil service" examinations were used in China (Worthen & Sanders, 1973). Systematic evaluation in the schools, as we know it today first came into use at the end of the last century.

Over the years there have been varying degrees of interest and use of evaluation in all types of educational programs. In the late 50s, as a result of the launching of Sputnik, large sums of money became available from such agencies as the National Science Foundation for the inservice education and retraining of teachers. In the beginning little emphasis was placed on the evaluation of these programs. However, over the years the cry of accountability has been heard and more and more emphasis has been placed on showing the value of all types of education programs. Also, greater emphasis has been placed on evaluation designed to improve programs as they were being offered.

Inservice Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is a complex task yet one that is essential. Many workers have developed models and plans over the years that can be used to evaluate all types of programs. For example Madaus, Scriven, and Stufflebeam (1983) have summarized a wealth of information on evaluation models that can be applied to problems associated with inservice teacher education programs. Ayers and Berney (1989) have summarized a set of plans for the evaluation of

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teacher education programs. Many of the ideas that are contained in the volume could be used in the evaluation of an inservice teacher education program. Ayers (1987) and Alvir (1976) have advanced plans for the evaluation of workshops and institutes that can be utilized effectively with teacher inservice programs.

The key to an effective evaluation is the specification of the program objectives. They relate both to participant progress and program impact. Great care must be taken and time spent in specifying the goals and the related participant behavioral criteria.

Evaluation can be described as a means of providing information through formal methods (such as criteria, measurement, and statistics) to serve as a rational basis for decision-making activities. Two major aspects of a workshop or institute inservice program must be evaluated; the participants and the program itself.

Evaluation of an inservice program and the participants is aimed at answering questions related to the effectiveness of the program. Specifically, interest should focus on the degree to which the goals of the program and the objectives of the participants and faculty are met. The evaluation provides a description of the impact the experience has on the participants.

Curriculum evaluation should be concerned with collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data related to four kinds of decisions:

(1) Planning - Specification of the domain, major goals and specific objectives to be served.

(2) Programming - Specification of procedures, personnel, facilities, budget, and other resource requirements.

(3) Implementing - Specification of activities related to directing programmed activities.

(4) Recycling - Specification of data related to terminating, continuing, evaluating or modifying activities.

Basically, two target groups (and objectives) are served by the evaluation plan. These are related to evaluation of individual participant progress toward a specified set of objectives and overall effectiveness of the workshop programs. The evaluation is approached through two kinds of activities - formative and summative. Formative evaluation is concerned with the modification and improvement of the program during its development and implementation. Summative evaluation refers to an end-of-experience assessment of progress toward meeting the objectives of the program. Juxtaposition of the relevant dimensions of the evaluation design - type of evaluation (formative and summative) and target group (individual and program) - provide a general framework for evaluating a workshop. Follow-up evaluation is utilized after individuals return to the job and can be thought of as an

extension of summative evaluation. The remainder of this section provides suggestions for the implementation of formative, summative, and follow-up evaluation.

Implementation of Formative Evaluation

Several strategies exist for the formative evaluation of an inservice program. It is proposed that a series of "goal cards" be developed by the staff of the program for use by individual participants. These cards will carry statements of the objectives related to the program and its ultimate goals. As each goal is mastered, it is checked off. In this way, both student and staff are made aware of an individual's progress and can perhaps highlight areas where more work is needed, or a change in instructional methodology is called for. These cards can be used throughout the duration of the program. They will cause all concerned individuals to focus on the changes that are being achieved.

Feedback data related to the program, its objectives, and organization should be gathered at a minimum of two points. Upon completion of the first half of a program (or at regular intervals for longer programs), a structured questionnaire should be administered to the participants. Aspects of the program such as academic, personnel, and social can be evaluated. Indicated changes can be made in order to improve the program. Near the end of short term inservice workshops, another administration of the questionnaire should be made in order to determine if the earlier adjustments that were made impacted the program in a positive manner. Results of the administrations of the questionnaire(s) should be discussed with the participants and staff at a group meeting.

Each instructor who works with the program should be requested to use a course-instructor evaluation form that is keyed to the program of study and the teaching methods being used. Adjustments in the program can be made as appropriate. In a program that extends over a period of several months, it may be desirable to use the instructor evaluation questionnaire on more than one occasion (Ayers & Berney, 1989).

Implementation of Summative Evaluation

Overall program effectiveness, including outcomes assessment of achievement of cognitive or psychomotor skills or changes in attitude, can be measured in several ways. Program effectiveness can be judged by use of a rating by the participants of the degree to which program objectives are met using a set of absolute scales. Gain in cognitive knowledge can be measured by use of staff developed or, if appropriate, other types of standardized instruments.

Measurements of change in the affective domain can be accomplished by use of a semantic differential or other attitude measure. Application of the semantic differential technique provide valuable data regarding the impact of the program. It is proposed that six to ten major concepts related to the overall program goals be used as stimuli for the application of a twelve scale semantic differential. Each concept should be rated at the beginning and end

of the instructional program. Changes in semantic space for the concepts along three dimensions, evaluation, potency, and activity, can be made.

An inservice workshop can be evaluated in a qualitative manner by the use of a trained observer or observers. Such individuals can observe the program on an intermittent basis or sit through the total program (Lawrenz & McCreath, 1989). Throughout the period, the observer(s) can utilize checklists to record the reactions of the participants to the instructional program. Interaction between the instructor(s) and the students can be observed and participants can be interviewed during and after the close of the program.

All information collected during the program can be utilized to make changes as needed and to improve the program (formative evaluation) as it is being offered. Also, much of the information can be utilized to determine the impact (summative evaluation) of the inservice program.

Implementation of Follow-up Evaluation

In order to more fully determine the impact of the program, the participants can be asked to serve as subjects in the application of a follow-up evaluation model. Follow-up studies can take several forms. For example, they can range from a simple questionnaire sent to the participants after they are on the job to visitation utilizing interview protocols and observation instruments. The follow-up aspects of a workshop or institute are probably the most important in determining the impact of a program. Follow-up evaluation is the most reliable; however, it can be the most costly. Therefore its use must be carefully considered and weighed against the information it will provide. Feedback from a workshop or institute programs can be used to further refine a program for replication at a later time and for showing accountability to the sponsoring agency.

Follow-up evaluation can take several forms. Interviews or questionnaires can be utilized with the participants after the close of the program. Principals and supervisors can be surveyed to determine their impressions of the impact of the program. Classroom observation can be conducted by trained observers, after the close of the program. Prior to the start of the inservice program, tests can be administered to the children of the teachers. In turn, after the close of the program and implementation of the results of the inservice program in the classroom, additional testing can occur to determine the impact of the program.

Implementation of an Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plans outlined are simple and can provide an institution or sponsoring agency much valuable information. The accountability standards of funding agencies can be met and information will be available for improving future workshops and institutes. The key to implementation of evaluation is adequate resources and development of a system during the initial planning for a workshop. Evaluation will not just happen. It must be planned. The reference section lists several manuals and documents on workshop and institute evaluation that contain more details and sample instruments that can be adapted for use with most any type of workshop or institute.

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